The Greek word **ἀστήρ** (*astēr*) primarily refers to a luminous body in the sky, but its nuances shifted slightly across different eras and literary contexts. While we often translate it simply as "star," its lexical range was significantly broader in antiquity, encompassing almost any point-like light in the heavens.

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1. Ancient & Epic Greek (Homeric Period)

In the earliest Greek literature (c. 8th century BCE), *astēr* was used to describe discrete celestial objects, often with a focus on their brilliance and individual character.

- **Fixed Stars & Constellations:** Used for specific stars like Sirius (the "Dog Star") or constellations like Orion and the Pleiades.
- **Meteorological Phenomena:** It could refer to shooting stars or meteors (*astēr diattōn*).
- **Metaphorical Radiance:** Homer often uses *astēr* in similes to describe the gleam of bronze armor or the brightness of a hero's eyes.*Example:* In the *Iliad*, Achilles' armor is compared to an *astēr* that rises in autumn, bringing both brilliance and dread.

2. Classical Greek (5th–4th Century BCE)

During the Classical period, the word became more integrated into the burgeoning fields of natural philosophy and early astronomy.

- **General Celestial Bodies:** Distinctions began to emerge between "fixed" stars and "wandering" stars (*planētēs astēr*).
- **Collective vs. Individual:** While *astron* (ἄστρον) was often used to refer to a group of stars or a constellation, *astēr* remained the preferred term for a single, individual star.
- **Poetic/Divine Association:** In tragedy (Aeschylus, Sophocles), stars were often viewed as "living" or divine witnesses to human events, sometimes referred to as "eyes of the night."

3. Koine Greek (Hellenistic & New Testament Period)

By the Koine period, *astēr* maintained its technical astronomical meaning while expanding its symbolic and apocalyptic range.

- **Planetary Identification:** It continued to describe planets (e.g., the "morning star" or "evening star").
- **Apocalyptic Symbolism:** In Jewish and Christian literature (like the Septuagint and the New Testament), *astēr* frequently symbolizes:
    - **Angelic Beings:** Stars are often synonymous with angels or heavenly powers (e.g., Revelation 1:20, "the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches").
    - **Messianic Figures:** Drawing from Numbers 24:17 ("A star shall come out of Jacob"), it became a title for a promised ruler or the Messiah.

- **Guiding Lights:** The most famous Koine usage is the "Star of Bethlehem," which functions as a miraculous, moving sign rather than a fixed astronomical body.

Comparison of Lexical Range

Aspect	Ancient (Epic)	Classical	Koine
Primary Meaning	A bright point of light.	An individual celestial body.	A star, planet, or angel.
Scientific Tone	Descriptive/Heroic.	Taxonomic/Philosophical.	Symbolic/Theological.
Associated Terms	Meteors, sparks.	Fixed vs. Wandering.	Signs, wonders, spirits.